THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

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Reice Torbert.

The Bibelot Series.

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE:

A BOOK OF LYRICS.

Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things;
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down; . . .
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead
Their musical soft memories, and kept red
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,
The sunsets of their stories in his skies? . . .
Hath he not bid relume their flameless flowers
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,
And the sweet shining signs of women's names
That mark the months out and the weeks anew
He moves in changeless change of seasons through
To fill the days up of his dateless year
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenevere?
. . . . . .
They have the night, who had like us the day.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

A Book of Lyrics

Chosen from the works of
William Morris

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THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE:

A BOOK OF LYRICS.

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE.

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right such great lords — still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak:

"'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

" A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

" Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

" And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

" 'After a shivering half-hour you said,
'God help! heaven's colour, the blue;' and he said, 'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

" And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

" Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

" Nevertheless you, O Sir Gawaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

"'Son of King Ban of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down — Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up forever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold forever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast,

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

'From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting:

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; If I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before — and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gawaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinn'd this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gawaine be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in la Fausse Garde, for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

"'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer not—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

"'A knife-point last night:' so must I defend
The honour of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. 'Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

" Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
' Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!

" ' Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

" ' For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovell'd at his feet,
And groan'd at being slain so young — ' at least.'

" My knight said, ' Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,

" Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

" Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

" The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

" And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went:
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away the grey, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colour'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

" Forever? am I not a gracious proof —
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found' —
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

" When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" 'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" 'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" 'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight:

" 'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" 'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" 'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'Come?' there was one less than three

" In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I *looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,*
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"*And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile*
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"*My maids were all about me, and my head*
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"*By God! I will not tell you more to-day,*
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"*How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the mad fit*
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"*Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,*
Whatever may have happen'd these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"*All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears.*"
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turn'd sideways; listening like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She lean'd eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

OLD LOVE.

You *must be very old, Sir Giles,*"
I *said; he said:* "*Yea, very old:*"
Whereat *the mournfullest of smiles*
Creased his dry skin with many a fold.

"*They hammer'd out my basnet point*
Into a round salade," *he said,*
"*The basnet being quite out of joint,*
Natheless the salade rasps my head."

He *gazed at the great fire awhile:*
"*And you are getting old, Sir John;*"
(He *said this with that cunning smile*
That was most sad;) "*we both wear on,*

"*Knights come to court and look at me,*
With eyebrows up, except my lord,
And my dear lady, none I see
That know the ways of my old sword."

(*My lady! at that word no pang*
Stopp'd all my blood.) "*But tell me, John,*
Is it quite true that pagans hang
So thick about the east, that on

"*The eastern sea no Venice flag*
Can fly unpaid for?" "*True,*" *I said,*
"*And in such way the miscreants drag*
Christ's cross upon the ground, I dread

"That Constantine must fall this year."
Within my heart; "These things are small;
This is not small, that things outwear
I thought were made for ever, yea, all,

"All things go soon or late;" I said—
I saw the duke in court next day;
Just as before, his grand great head
Above his gold robes dreaming lay,

Only his face was paler; there
I saw his duchess sit by him;
And she—she was changed more; her hair
Before my eyes that used to swim,

And make me dizzy with great bliss
Once, when I used to watch her sit—
Her hair is bright still, yet it is
As though some dust were thrown on it.

Her eyes are shallower, as though
Some grey glass were behind; her brow
And cheeks the straining bones show through,
Are not so good for kissing now.

Her lips are drier now she is
A great duke's wife these many years,
They will not shudder with a kiss
As once they did, being moist with tears.

Also her hands have lost that way
Of clinging that they used to have;
They look'd quite easy, as they lay
Upon the silken cushions brave

With broidery of the apples green
My Lord Duke bears upon his shield.
Her face, alas! that I have seen
Look fresher than an April field,

This is all gone now; gone also
Her tender walking; when she walks
She is most queenly I well know,
And she is fair still:—as the stalks

Of faded summer-lilies are,
So is she grown now unto me
This spring-time, when the flowers star
The meadows, birds sing wonderfully.

I warrant once she used to cling
About his neck, and kiss'd him so,
And then his coming step would ring
Joy-bells for her,—some time ago.

Ah! sometimes like an idle dream
That hinders true life overmuch,
Sometimes like a lost heaven, these seem.—
This love is not so hard to smutch.

THE GILLIFLOWER OF GOLD.

A GOLDEN *gilliflower to-day*
I *wore upon my helm alway,*
And won the prize of this tourney.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

However well Sir Giles might sit,
His sun was weak to wither it,
Lord Miles's blood was dew on it:
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Although my spear in splinters flew,
From John's steel-coat my eye was true;
I *wheel'd about, and cried for you,*
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Yea, do not doubt my heart was good,
Though my sword flew like rotten wood,
To shout, although I scarcely stood,
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

My hand was steady too, to take
My axe from round my neck, and break
John's steel-coat up for my love's sake.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

When I stood in my tent again,
Arming afresh, I felt a pain
Take hold of me, I was so fain—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

To *hear:* "Honneur aux fils des preux!
Right in my ears again, and shew
The gilliflower blossom'd new.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

The Sieur Guillaume against me came,
His tabard bore three points of flame
From a red heart: with little blame—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Our tough spears crackled up like straw;
He was the first to turn and draw
His sword, that had nor speck nor flaw,—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

But I felt weaker than a maid,
And my brain, dizzied and afraid,
Within my helm a fierce tune play'd,—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Until I thought of your dear head,
Bow'd to the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red;—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Crash! how the swords met, "giroflée!"
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
"La belle! la belle! jaune giroflée!"
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Once more the great swords met again,
"La belle! la belle!" *but who fell then*
Le Sieur Guillaume, who struck down ten;—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

And as with mazed and unarm'd face,
Toward my own crown and the Queen's place,
They led me at a gentle pace—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

I *almost saw your quiet head*
Bow'd o'er the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

SHAMEFUL DEATH.

THERE *were four of us about that bed;*
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I *and his mother stood at the head,*
Over his feet lay the bride;
We *were quite sure that he was dead,*
Though his eyes were open wide.

He *did not die in the night,*
He did not die in the day,
But *in the morning twilight*
His spirit pass'd away,
When *neither sun nor moon was bright,*
And the trees were merely grey.

He *was not slain with the sword,*
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet *spoke he never a word*
After he came in here;
I *cut away the cord*
From the neck of my brother dear.

He *did not strike one blow,*
For the recreants came behind,
In *a place where the hornbeams grow,*
A path right hard to find,
For *the hornbeam boughs swing so,*
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
  When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
  Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
  Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
  And my hair is all turn'd grey,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
  Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
  I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
  And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
  When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
  Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
  I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
  And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE EVE OF CRECY.

GOLD *on her head, and gold on her feet,*
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet; —
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dress'd and pleasantly;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
I would kiss the place where the gold hems meet,
And the golden girdle round my sweet—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me! I have never touch'd her hand;
When the arriere-ban goes through the land,
Six basnets under my pennon stand;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And many an one grins under his hood:
"*Sir Lambert de Bois, with all his men good,*
Has neither food nor firewood;" —
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my few poor varlets grumble and drink
In my desolate hall, where the fires sink,—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near:
For what have I to lose or fear?—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance
A right fair measure in this war-dance,
Before the eyes of Philip of France;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And sometime it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite—

That folks may say: "Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite;—

"And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood
Of a damsel of right noble blood:"
St. Ives, for Lambert of the wood!—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

THE LITTLE TOWER.

Up and away through the drifting rain!
Let us ride to the Little Tower again,

Up and away from the council board!
Do on the hauberk, gird on the sword.

The king is blind with gnashing his teeth,
Change gilded scabbard to leather sheath:

Though our arms are wet with the slanting rain,
This is joy to ride to my love again:

I laugh in his face when he bids me yield;
Who knows one field from the other field,

For the grey rain driveth all astray?—
Which way through the floods, good carle, I pray?

"The left side yet! the left side yet!
Till your hand strikes on the bridge parapet."

"Yea so: the causeway holdeth good
Under the water?" "Hard as wood;

Right away to the uplands; speed, good knight."
Seven hours yet before the light.

Shake the wet off on the upland road;
My tabard has grown a heavy load.

What matter? up and down hill after hill;
Dead grey night for five hours still.

The hill-road droppeth lower again,
Lower, down to the poplar plain.

No furlong farther for us to-night,
The Little Tower draweth in sight;

They are ringing the bells, and the torches glare,
Therefore the roofs of wet slate stare.

There she stands, and her yellow hair slantingly
Drifts the same way that the rain goes by.

Who will be faithful to us to-day,
With little but hard glaive-strokes for pay?

The grim king fumes at the council-board
"Three more days, and then the sword;

Three more days, and my sword through his head;
And above his white brows, pale and dead,

A paper crown on the top of the spire;
And for her the stake and the witches' fire."

Therefore though it be long ere day,
Take axe and pick and spade, I pray.

Break the dams down all over the plain:
God send us three more days such rain:

Block all the upland roads with trees;
The Little Tower with no great ease

Is won, I warrant; bid them bring
Much sheep and oxen, everything

The spits are wont to turn with; wine
And wheaten bread, that we may dine

In plenty each day of the siege;
Good friends, ye know me no hard liege;

My lady is right fair, see ye!
Pray God to keep you frank and free.

Love Isabeau, keep goodly cheer;
The Little Tower will stand well here

Many a year when we are dead,
And over it our green and red,
Barred with the Lady's golden head;
From mere old age when we are dead.

THE SAILING OF THE SWORD.

Across *the empty garden-beds,*
When the Sword went out to sea,
I *scarcely saw my sisters' heads*
Bowed *each beside a tree.*
I *could not see the castle leads,*
When the Sword went out to sea.

Alicia wore a scarlet gown,
When the Sword went out to sea,
But Ursula's was russet brown:
For *the mist we could not see*
The scarlet roofs of the good town,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Green holly in Alicia's hand,
When the Sword went out to sea;
With sere oak-leaves did Ursula stand;
O! *yet alas for me!*
I *did but bear a peel'd white wand,*
When the Sword went out to sea.

O, *russet brown and scarlet bright,*
When the Sword went out to sea,
My sisters wore; I wore but white:
Red, *brown, and white, are three;*
Three damozels; each had a knight,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Sir Robert shouted loud, and said,
When the Sword went out to sea,
"*Alicia, while I see thy head,*
What shall I bring for thee?"
O, *my sweet lord, a ruby red:*"
The Sword went out to sea.

Sir Miles said, while the sails hung down,
When the Sword went out to sea,
"*Oh, Ursula! while I see the town,*
What shall I bring for thee?"
"*Dear knight, bring back a falcon brown:*"
The Sword went out to sea.

But my Roland, no word he said
When the Sword went out to sea;
But only turn'd away his head,—
A quick shriek came from me:
Come back, dear lord, to your white maid;"—
The Sword went out to sea.

The hot sun bit the garden-beds,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Beneath an apple-tree our heads
Stretched out toward the sea;
Grey gleam'd the thirsty castle-leads,
When the Sword came back from sea.

Lord Robert brought a ruby red,
When the Sword came back from sea;
He kissed Alicia on the head:
"*I am come back to thee;*
'*Tis time, sweet love, that we were wed,*
Now the Sword is back from sea!"

Sir Miles he bore a falcon brown,
When the Sword came back from sea;
His arms went round tall Ursula's gown,—
"*What joy, O love, but thee?*
Let us be wed in the good town,
Now the Sword is back from sea!"

My heart grew sick, no more afraid,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Upon the deck a tall white maid
Sat on Lord Roland's knee;
His chin was press'd upon her head,
When the Sword came back from sea!

THE WIND.

Ah! no, no, it is nothing, surely nothing at all,
Only the wild-going wind round by the garden-wall,
For the dawn just now is breaking, the wind beginning to fall.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit, and think and think of the days gone by,
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs should cry,
Making no noise at all while the flambeau burns awry.

For my chair is heavy and carved, and with sweeping green behind
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin out in the gusts of the wind;
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep gash cut in the rind.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange will
roll out far,
And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a
wizard's jar;
And the dogs will howl for those who went last month
to the war.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit and think of love that is over and past,
O! so long ago—yes, I will be quiet at last:
Whether I like it or not, a grim half-slumber is cast

Over my worn old brains, that touches the roots of my
heart,
And above my half-shut eyes, the blue roof 'gins to part,
And show the blue spring sky, till I am ready to start

From out of the green-hung chair; but something keeps
me still,
And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with her on the side
of a hill,
Dotted—for was it not spring?—with tufts of the
daffodil.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted book in her
hand;
Her finger kept the place; I caught her, we both did
stand
Face to face, on the top of the highest hill in the land.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away from me,
While the flush went out of her face as her head fell back on a tree,
And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see;

And still I held to her arms till her shoulder touch'd my mail,
Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should prevail,
And her hair went over my robe, like a gold flag over a sail.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd me on the brow,
And then lay down on the grass, where the mark on the moss is now,
And spread her arms out wide while I went down below.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro on the side of the hill,
Till I gather'd and held in my arms great sheaves of the daffodil,
And when I came again my Margaret lay there still.

I *piled them high and high above her heaving breast,*
How *they were caught and held in her loose ungirded vest!*
But *one beneath her arm died, happy so to be prest!*

Wind, wind, thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Again I turn'd my back and went away for an hour;
She *said no word when I came again, so, flower by flower,*
I *counted the daffodils over, and cast them languidly lower.*

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

My *dry hands shook and shook as the green gown show'd again,*
Clear'd *from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow with pain,*
And *on to us both there fell from the sun-shower drops of rain.*

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Alas! *alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast,*
Blood *lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest,*
Blood *lay upon her arm where the flower had been prest.*

I *shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out far,*
The *faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar;*
And *then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone to the war.*

I knew them by the arms that I was used to paint
Upon their long thin shields; but the colours were all
grown faint,
And faint upon their banner was Olaf, king and saint.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

THE BLUE CLOSET.

The Damozels.

Lady Alice, lady Louise,
Between the wash of the tumbling seas
We are ready to sing, if so ye please;
So lay your long hands on the keys;
Sing, "Laudate pueri."

And ever the great bell overhead
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the dead.

Lady Louise.

Sister, let the measure swell
Not too loud; for you sing not well
If you drown the faint boom of the bell;
He is weary, so am I.

And ever the chevron overhead
Flapp'd on the banner of the dead;
(Was he asleep, or was he dead?)

Lady Alice.

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,
Two damozels wearing purple and green,
Four lone ladies dwelling here
From day to day and year to year;
And there is none to let us go;
To break the locks of the doors below,
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow;
And when we die no man will know
That we are dead; but they give us leave,
Once every year on Christmas-eve,

To sing in the Closet Blue one song;
And we should be so long, so long,
If we dared, in singing; for dream on dream,
They float on in a happy stream;
Float from the gold strings, float from the keys,
Float from the open'd lips of Louise;
But, alas! the sea-salt oozes through
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue;

And ever the great bell overhead
Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.

[They sing all together.]

How long ago was it, how long ago,
He came to this tower with hands full of snow?

"Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down," he said,
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran through my hair,
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders and bare.

"I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,
For my tears are all hidden deep under the seas;

"In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my tears,
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old years;

"Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small and dry,
I am so feeble now, would I might die."

And in truth the great bell overhead
Left off his pealing for the dead,
Perchance, because the wind was dead.

Will he come back again, or is he dead?
O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!
Both his soul and his body to me are most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive
Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-eve.

Through the floor shot up a lily red,
With a patch of earth from the land of the dead,
For he was strong in the land of the dead.

What matter that his cheeks were pale,
His kind kiss'd lips all grey?
"O, *love Louise, have you waited long?*"
"O, *my lord Arthur, yea.*"

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek
Was stiff with frozen rime?
His eyes were grown quite blue again,
As in the happy time.

"O, *love Louise, this is the key*
Of the happy golden land!
O, *sisters, cross the bridge with me,*
My eyes are full of sand.
What matter that I cannot see,
If ye take me by the hand?"

And ever the great bell overhead,
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the dead;
For their song ceased, and they were dead.

THE TUNE OF SEVEN TOWERS.

No *one goes there now:*
For what is left to fetch away
From the desolate battlements all arow,
And the lead roof heavy and grey?
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

No *one walks there now;*
Except in the white moonlight
The white ghosts walk in a row;
If one could see it, an awful sight,—
"Listen!" said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

But none can see them now,
Though they sit by the side of the moat,
Feet half in the water, there in a row,
Long hair in the wind afloat.
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

If any will go to it now,
He must go to it all alone,
Its gates will not open to any row
Of glittering spears — will you *go alone?*
"Listen!" said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

By *my love go there now*,
To *fetch me my coif away*,
My *coif and my kirtle, with pearls arow*,
Oliver, *go to-day!*
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

I *am unhappy now*,
I *cannot tell you why;*
If *you go, the priests and I in a row*
Will *pray that you may not die.*
"Listen!" said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

If *you will go for me now*,
I *will kiss your mouth at last;*
[She sayeth inwardly.]
(The graves stand grey in a row,)
Oliver, *hold me fast!*
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

GOLDEN WINGS.

MIDWAYS *of a walled garden,*
In the happy poplar land,
Did an ancient castle stand,
With an old knight for a warden.

Many scarlet bricks there were
In its walls, and old grey stone;
Over which red apples shone
At the right time of the year.

On the bricks the green moss grew,
Yellow lichen on the stone,
Over which red apples shone;
Little war that castle knew.

Deep green water fill'd the moat,
Each side had a red-brick lip,
Green and mossy with the drip
Of dew and rain; there was a boat

Of carven wood, with hangings green
About the stern; it was great bliss
For lovers to sit there and kiss
In the hot summer noons, not seen.

Across the moat the fresh west wind
In very little ripples went;
The way the heavy aspens bent
Towards it, was a thing to mind.

The painted drawbridge over it
Went up and down with gilded chains,
'Twas pleasant in the summer rains
Within the bridge-house there to sit.

There were five swans that ne'er did eat
The water-weeds, for ladies came
Each day, and young knights did the same,
And gave them cakes and bread for meat.

They had a house of painted wood,
A red roof gold-spiked over it,
Wherein upon their eggs to sit
Week after week; no drop of blood,

Drawn from men's bodies by sword-blows,
Came ever there, or any tear;
Most certainly from year to year
'Twas pleasant as a Provence rose.

The banners seem'd quite full of ease,
That over the turret-roofs hung down;
The battlements could get no frown
From the flower-moulded cornices.

Who walked in that garden there?
Miles and Giles and Isabeau,
Tall Jehane du Castel beau,
Alice of the golden hair,

Big Sir Gervaise, the good knight,
Fair Ellayne le Violet,
Mary, Constance fille de fay,
Many dames with footfall light.

Whosoever wander'd there,
Whether it be dame or knight,
Half of scarlet, half of white
Their raiment was; of roses fair

Each wore a garland on the head,
At Ladies' Gard the way was so:
Fair Jehane du Castel beau
Wore her wreath till it was dead.

Little joy she had of it,
Of the raiment white and red,
Or the garland on her head,
She had none with whom to sit

In the carven boat at noon;
None the more did Jehane weep,
She would only stand and keep
Saying, "He will be here soon."

Many times in the long day
Miles and Giles and Gervaise past,
Holding each some white hand fast,
Every time they heard her say:

"Summer cometh to an end,
Undern cometh after noon;
Golden wings will be here soon,
What if I some token send?"

Wherefore that night within the hall,
With open mouth and open eyes,
Like some one listening with surprise,
She sat before the sight of all.

Stoop'd down a little she sat there,
With neck stretch'd out and chin thrown up,
One hand around a golden cup;
And strangely with her fingers fair

She beat some tune upon the gold;
The minstrels in the gallery
Sung: "Arthur, who will never die,
In Avallon he groweth old."

And when the song was ended, she
Rose and caught up her gown and ran;
None stopp'd her eager face and wan
Of all that pleasant company.

Right so within her own chamber
Upon her bed she sat; and drew
Her breath in quick gasps; till she knew
That no man follow'd after her.

She took the garland from her head,
Loosed all her hair, and let it lie
Upon the coverlit; thereby
She laid the gown of white and red;

And she took off her scarlet shoon,
And bared her feet; still more and more
Her sweet face redden'd; evermore
She murmur'd: "He will be here soon;

"Truly he cannot fail to know
My tender body waits him here;
And if he knows, I have no fear
For poor Jehane du Castel beau."

She took a sword within her hand,
Whose hilts were silver, and she sung,
Somehow like this, wild words that rung
A long way over the moonlit land:—

Gold wings across the sea!
Grey light from tree to tree,
Gold hair beside my knee,
I pray thee come to me,
Gold wings!

The water slips,
The red-bill'd moorhen dips.
Sweet kisses on red lips;
Alas! the red rust grips,
And the blood-red dagger rips,
Yet, O knight, come to me!

Are not my blue eyes sweet?
The west wind from the wheat
Blows cold across my feet;
Is it not time to meet
Gold wings across the sea?

White swans on the green moat,
Small feathers left afloat
By the blue-painted boat;
Swift running of the stoat;
Sweet gurglings note by note
Of sweet music.

O gold wings,
Listen how gold hair sings,
And the Ladies Castle rings,
Gold wings across the sea.

I *sit on a purple bed,*
Outside, *the wall is red,*
Thereby *the apple hangs,*
And *the wasp, caught by the fangs,*

Dies *in the autumn night.*
And *the bat flits till light,*
And *the love-crazed knight*

Kisses *the long wet grass:*
The *weary days pass,—*
Gold *wings across the sea!*

Gold *wings across the sea!*
Moonlight *from tree to tree,*
Sweet *hair laid on my knee,*
O, *sweet knight, come to me.*

Gold *wings, the short night slips,*
The *white swan's long neck drips,*
I *pray thee, kiss my lips,*
Gold *wings across the sea.*

No *answer through the moonlit night;*
No *answer in the cold grey dawn;*
No *answer when the shaven lawn*
Grew *green, and all the roses bright.*

Her *tired feet look'd cold and thin,*
Her *lips were twitch'd, and wretched tears,*
Some, *as she lay, roll'd past her ears,*
Some *fell from off her quivering chin.*

Her long throat, stretch'd to its full length,
  Rose up and fell right brokenly;
  As though the unhappy heart was nigh
Striving to break with all its strength.

And when she slipp'd from off the bed,
  Her cramp'd feet would not hold her; she
  Sank down and crept on hand and knee,
On the window-sill she laid her head.

There, with crooked arm upon the sill,
  She look'd out, muttering dismally:
  "There is no sail upon the sea,
No pennon on the empty hill.

"I cannot stay here all alone,
  Or meet their happy faces here,
  And wretchedly I have no fear;
A little while, and I am gone."

Therewith she rose upon her feet,
  And totter'd; cold and misery
  Still made the deep sobs come, till she
At last stretch'd out her fingers sweet,

And caught the great sword in her hand;
  And, stealing down the silent stair,
  Barefooted in the morning air,
And only in her smock, did stand

Upright upon the green lawn grass;
  And hope grew in her as she said:
  "I have thrown off the white and red,
And pray God it may come to pass

"I *meet him; if ten years go by*
Before I meet him; if, indeed,
Meanwhile both soul and body bleed,
Yet there is end of misery,

"*And I have hope. He could not come,*
But I can go to him and show
These new things I have got to know,
And make him speak, who has been dumb."

O *Jehane! the red morning sun*
Changed her white feet to glowing gold,
Upon her smock, on crease and fold,
Changed that to gold which had been dun.

O *Miles, and Giles, and Isabeau,*
Fair Ellayne le Violet,
Mary, Constance fille de fay!
Where is Jehane du Castel beau?

O *big Gervaise ride apace!*
Down to the hard yellow sand,
Where the water meets the land.
This is Jehane by her face;

Why has she a broken sword?
Mary! she is slain outright;
Verily a piteous sight;
Take her up without a word!

Giles and Miles and Gervaise there,
Ladies' Gard must meet the war;
Whatsoever knights these are,
Man the walls withouten fear!

Axes to the apple-trees,
Axes to the aspens tall!
Barriers without the wall
May be lightly made of these.

O poor shivering Isabeau;
Poor Ellayne le Violet,
Bent with fear! we miss to-day
Brave Jehane du Castel beau.

O poor Mary, weeping so!
Wretched Constance fille de fay!
Verily we miss to-day
Fair Jehane du Castel beau.

The apples now grow green and sour
Upon the mouldering castle-wall,
Before they ripen there they fall:
There are no banners on the tower.

The draggled swans most eagerly eat
The green weeds trailing in the moat;
Inside the rotting leaky boat
You see a slain man's stiffen'd feet.

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS.

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.
By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises;
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poictiers where we made them run
So fast — why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this."

But, "O," she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train

Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off—
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and—"No."
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands:
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help—ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,

I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."
"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know," "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!' —
Eh — gag me, Robert! — sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it — So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert — both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily

He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the hands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

TWO RED ROSES ACROSS THE MOON.

THERE *was a lady lived in a hall,*
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;
And ever she sung from noon to noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

There was a knight came riding by
In early spring, when the roads were dry;
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;
And left that lady singing at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
And the scarlet and blue had got to be met,
He rode on the spur till the next warm noon;—
Two red roses across the moon.

But the battle was scatter'd from hill to hill,
From the windmill to the watermill;
And he said to himself, as it near'd the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

You scarce could see for the scarlet and blue,
A golden helm or a golden shoe:
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the noon,
Two red crosses across the moon!

Verily then the gold bore through
The huddled spears of the scarlet and blue;
And they cried, as they cut them down at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

I trow he stopp'd when he rode again
By the hall, though draggled sore with the rain;
And his lips were pinch'd to kiss at the noon
Two red roses across the moon.

Under the may she stoop'd to the crown,
All was gold, there was nothing of brown;
And the horns blew up in the hall at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

SIR GILES' WAR-SONG.

Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

The clink of arms is good to hear,
The flap of pennons fair to see;
Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

The leopards and lilies are fair to see,
"St. George Guienne" right good to hear:
Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

I *stood by the barrier,*
My coat being blazon'd fair to see;
Ho! is there any will ride with me,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières?

Clisson put out his head to see,
And lifted his basnet up to hear;
I *pull'd him through the bars to* ME,
Sir Giles, le bon des barrières.

SUMMER DAWN.

Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt
the cloud-bars,
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

IN PRISON.

WEARILY, *drearily,*
Half the day long,
Flap the great banners
High over the stone;
Strangely and eerily
Sounds the wind's song,
Bending the banner-poles.

While, all alone,
Watching the loophole's spark,
Lie I, with life all dark,
Feet tether'd, hands fetter'd
Fast to the stone,
The grim walls, square letter'd
With prison'd men's groan.

Still strain the banner-poles
Through the wind's song,
Westward the banner rolls
Over my wrong.

TWO SONGS

From

The Life and Death of Jason.

I.

"O BITTER *sea, tumultuous sea,*
Full many an ill is wrought by thee!—
Unto the wasters of the land
Thou holdest out thy wrinkled hand;
And when they leave the conquered town,
Whose black smoke makes thy surges brown,
Driven betwixt thee and the sun,
As the long day of blood is done,
From many a league of glittering waves
Thou smilest on them and their slaves.
"*The thin bright-eyed Phœnician*
Thou drawest to thy waters wan,
With ruddy eve and golden morn
Thou temptest him, until, forlorn,
Unburied, under alien skies
Cast up ashore his body lies.
"*Yea, whoso sees thee from his door,*
Must ever long for more and more;
Nor will the beechen bowl suffice,
Or homespun robe of little price,
Or hood well-woven of the fleece
Undyed, or unspiced wine of Greece;
So sore his heart is set upon
Purple, and gold, and cinnamon;
For as thou cravest, so he craves,
Until he rolls beneath thy waves.
Nor in some landlocked, unknown bay,
Can satiate thee for one day.

"Now, therefore, O thou bitter sea,
With no long words we pray to thee,
But ask thee, hast thou felt before
Such strokes of the long ashen oar?
And hast thou yet seen such a prow
Thy rich and niggard waters plough?
"Nor yet, O sea, shalt thou be cursed,
If at thy hands we gain the worst,
And, wrapt in water, roll about
Blind-eyed, unheeding song or shout,
Within thine eddies far from shore,
Warmed by no sunlight any more.
"Therefore, indeed, we joy in thee,
And praise thy greatness, and will we
Take at thy hands both good and ill,
Yea, what thou wilt, and praise thee still,
Enduring not to sit at home,
And wait until the last days come,
When we no more may care to hold
White bosoms under crowns of gold,
And our dulled hearts no longer are
Stirred by the clangorous noise of war,
And hope within our souls is dead,
And no joy is remembered.
"So, if thou hast a mind to slay,
Fair prize thou hast of us to-day;
And if thou hast a mind to save,
Great praise and honour shalt thou have;
But whatso thou wilt do with us,
Our end shall not be piteous,
Because our memories shall live
When folk forget the way to drive
The black keel through the heaped-up sea,
And half dried up thy waters be."

II.

"I KNOW *a little garden close*
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.

"*And though within it no birds sing,*
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God,
Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before.

"*There comes a murmur from the shore,*
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea;
The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.

"*For which I cry both day and night,*
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.

"*Yet tottering as I am, and weak,*
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death
An entrance to that happy place,
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea."

FIVE LYRICS

FROM

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.

I.

HÆC.

In the white-flowered hawthorn brake,
Love, be merry for my sake;
Twine the blossoms in my hair,
Kiss me where I am most fair—
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

ILLE.

Nay, the garlanded gold hair
Hides thee where thou art most fair;
Hides the rose-tinged hills of snow—
Ah, sweet love, I have thee now!
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

HÆC.

Shall we weep for a dead day,
Or set Sorrow in our way?
Hidden by my golden hair,
Wilt thou weep that sweet days wear?
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

ILLE.

Weep, O Love, the days that flit,
Now, while I can feel thy breath;
Then may I remember it
Sad and old, and near my death.
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

II.

OUTLANDERS, *whence come ye last?*
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
Through what green seas and great have ye past?
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away, O masters mine,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
We come to bear you goodly wine,
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away we come to you,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
To tell of great tidings strange and true.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News, news of the Trinity,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
And Mary and Joseph from over the sea!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

For as we wandered far and wide,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
What hap do ye deem there should us betide!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

Under a bent when the night was deep,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
There lay three shepherds tending their sheep.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"O *ye shepherds, what have ye seen,*
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
To slay your sorrow, and heal your teen?"
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"*In an ox-stall this night we saw,*
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
A *babe and a maid without a flaw.*
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"*There was an old man there beside,*
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
His hair was white and his hood was wide.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"*And as we gazed this thing upon,*
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
Those twain knelt down to the Little One.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"*And a marvellous song we straight did hear,*
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
That slew our sorrow and healed our care."
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News of a fair and a marvellous thing,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door,
Nowell, nowell, nowell, we sing!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

III.

FAIR *is the night and fair the day,*
Now April is forgot of May,
Now into June May falls away;
Fair day, fair night, O give me back
The tide that all fair things did lack
Except my love, except my sweet!

Blow back, O wind! thou art not kind,
Though thou art sweet; thou hast no mind
Her hair about my sweet to wind;
O flowery sward, though thou art bright,
I praise thee not for thy delight,
Thou hast not kissed her silver feet.

Thou know'st her not, O rustling tree,
What dost thou then to shadow me,
Whose shade her breast did never see?
O flowers, in vain ye bow adown!
Ye have not felt her odorous gown
Brush past your heads my lips to meet.

Flow on, great river — thou mayst deem
That far away, a summer stream,
Thou sawest her limbs amidst thee gleam,
And kissed her foot, and kissed her knee,
Yet get thee swift unto the sea!
With nought of true thou wilt me greet.

And thou that men call by my name,
O helpless one, hast thou no shame
That thou must even look the same,
As while agone, as while agone,
When thou and she were left alone,
And hands, and lips, and tears did meet?

Grow weak and pine, lie down to die,
O body in thy misery,
Because short time and sweet goes by;
O foolish heart, how weak thou art!
Break, break, because thou needs must part
From thine own love, from thine own sweet!

IV.

O THOU *who drawest nigh across the sea,*
O *heart that seekest Love perpetually,*
Nor know'st his name, come now at last to me!

Come, thirst of love thy lips too long have borne,
Hunger of love thy heart hath long outworn,
Speech hadst thou but to call thyself forlorn.

The seeker finds now, the parched lips are lea
To sweet full streams, the hungry heart is fed,
And song springs up from moans of sorrow dead.

Draw nigh, draw nigh, and tell me all thy tale;
In words grown sweet since all the woe doth fail,
Show me wherewith thou didst thy woe bewail.

Draw nigh, draw nigh, beloved! think of these
That stand around as well-wrought images,
Earless and eyeless as these trembling trees.

I think the sky calls living none but three:
The God that looketh thence and thee and me;
And He made us, but we made Love to be.

Think not of time, then, for thou shalt not die
How soon soever shall the world go by,
And nought be left but God and thou and I.

And yet, O love, why makest thou delay?
Life comes not till thou comest, and the day
That knows no end may yet be cast away.

V.

BEFORE *our lady came on earth*
Little there was of joy or mirth;
About the borders of the sea
The sea-folk wandered heavily;
About the wintry river side
The weary fishers would abide.

Alone within the weaving-room
The girls would sit before the loom,
And sing no song, and play no play;
Alone from dawn to hot mid-day,
From mid-day unto evening,

The men afield would work, nor sing,
'Mid weary thoughts of man and God,
Before thy feet the wet ways trod.

Unkissed the merchant bore his care,
Unkissed the knights went out to war,
Unkissed the mariner came home,
Unkissed the minstrel men did roam.

Or in the stream the maids would stare,
Nor know why they were made so fair;
Their yellow locks, their bosoms white,
Their limbs well wrought for all delight,
Seemed foolish things that waited death,
As hopeless as the flowers beneath
The weariness of unkissed feet:
No life was bitter then, or sweet.

Therefore, O Venus, well may we
Praise the green ridges of the sea
O'er which, upon a happy day,
Thou cam'st to take our shame away.

Well may we praise the curdling foam
Amidst the which thy feet did bloom,
Flowers of the gods; the yellow sand
They kissed atwixt the sea and land;
The bee-beset ripe-seeded grass,
Through which thy fine limbs first did pass;
The purple-dusted butterfly,
First blown against thy quivering thigh;
The first red rose that touched thy side,
And over-blown and fainting died;
The flickering of the orange shade,
Where first in sleep thy limbs were laid;
The happy day's sweet life and death,
Whose air first caught thy balmy breath—
Yea, all these things well praised may be,
But with what words shall we praise thee—
O Venus, O thou love alive,
Born to give peace to souls that strive?

The Youths.

O WINTER, *O white winter, wert thou gone*
No more within the wilds were I alone
Leaping with bent bow over stock and stone!

No more alone my love the lamp should burn,
Watching the weary spindle twist and turn,
Or o'er the web, hold back her tears and yearn:
O winter, O white winter, wert thou gone!

The Maidens.

Sweeet thoughts fly swiftlier than the drifting snow,
And with the twisting threads sweet longings grow,
And o'er the web sweet pictures come and go,
For no white winter are we long alone.

The Youths.

O stream so changed, what hast thou done to me,
That I thy glittering ford no more can see
Wreathing with white her fair feet lovingly?

See, in the rain she stands, and, looking down
With frightened eyes upon thy whirlpools brown,
Drops to her feet again her girded gown.
O hurrying turbid stream, what hast thou done?

The Maidens.

The clouds lift, telling of a happier day
When through the thin stream I shall take my way,
Girt round with gold, and garlanded with may,
What rushing stream can keep us long alone?

The Youths.

O burning Sun, O master of unrest,
Why must we, toiling, cast away the best,
Now, when the bird sleeps by her empty nest?

See, with my garland lying at her feet,
In lonely labour stands mine own, my sweet,

Above the quern half-filled with half-ground wheat.
O red taskmaster, that thy flames were done!
The Maidens.
O love, to-night across the half-shorn plain
Shall I not go to meet the yellow wain,
A look of love at end of toil to gain?
What flaming sun can keep us long alone?
The Youths.
To-morrow, said I, is grape gathering o'er;
To-morrow, and our loves are twinned no more.
To-morrow came, to bring us woe and war.

What have I done, that I should stand with these
Hearkening the dread shouts borne upon the breeze,
While she, far off, sits weeping 'neath her trees?
Alas, O kings, what is it ye have done?
The Maidens.
Come, love, delay not; come, and slay my dread!
Already is the banquet table spread;
In the cool chamber flower-strewn is my bed:
Come, love, what king shall keep us long alone?
The Youths.
O city, city, open thou thy gate!
See, with life snatched from out the hand of fate!
How on thy glittering triumph I must wait!

Are not her hands stretched out to me? Her eyes,
Grow they not weary as each new hope dies,
And lone before her still the long road lies?
O golden city, fain would I be gone!
The Maidens.
And thou art happy, amid shouts and songs,
And all that unto conquering men belongs.
Night hath no fear for me, and day no wrongs.
What brazen city gates can keep us, lone?
The Youths.
O long, long road, how bare thou art, and grey!
Hill after hill thou climbest, and the day
Is ended now, O moonlit endless way!

And she is standing where the rushes grow,
And still with white hand shades her anxious brow,
Though 'neath the world the sun is fallen now,
O dreary road, when will thy leagues be done?
The Maidens.
O tremblest thou, grey road, or do my feet
Tremble with joy, thy flinty face to meet?
Because my love's eyes soon mine eyes shall greet?
No heart thou hast to keep us long alone.
The Youths.
O wilt thou ne'er depart, thou heavy night?
When will thy slaying bring on the morning bright,
That leads my weary feet to my delight?

Why lingerest thou, filling with wandering fears
My lone love's tired heart; her eyes with tears
For thoughts like sorrow for the vanished years?
Weaver of ill thoughts, when wilt thou be gone?
The Maidens.
Love, to the east are thine eyes turned as mine,
In patient watching for the night's decline?
And hast thou noted this grey widening line?
Can any darkness keep us long alone?
The Youths.
O day, O day, is it a little thing
That thou so long unto thy life must cling,
Because I gave thee such a welcoming?

I called thee king of all felicity,
I praised thee that thou broughtest joy so nigh;
Thine hours are turned to years, thou wilt not die;
O day so longed for, would that thou wert gone!
The Maidens.
The light fails, love; the long day soon shall be
Nought but a pensive happy memory
Blessed for the tales it told to thee and me.
How hard it was, O love, to be alone.

ON THE EDGE OF THE WILDERNESS.

Puellæ.

WHENCE *comest thou, and whither goest thou?*
Abide! abide! longer the shadows grow;
What hopest thou the dark to thee will show?
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.

Why should I name the land across the sea
Wherein I first took hold on misery?
Why should I name the land that flees from me?
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.

What wilt thou do within the desert place
Whereto thou turnest now thy careful face?
Stay but a while to tell us of thy case.
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.

What, nigh the journey's end shall I abide,
When in the waste mine own love wanders wide,
When from all men for me she still doth hide?
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.

Nay, nay; but rather she forgetteth thee,
To sit upon the shore of some warm sea,
Or in green gardens where sweet fountains be.
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
Will ye then keep me from the wilderness,
Where I at least, alone with my distress,
The quiet land of changing dreams may bless?
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
Forget the false forgetter and be wise,
And 'mid these clinging hands and loving eyes,
Dream, not in vain, thou knowest paradise.
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
Ah! with your sweet eyes shorten not the day,
Nor let your gentle hands my journey stay!
Perchance love is not wholly cast away.
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
Pluck love away as thou wouldst pluck a thorn
From out thy flesh; for why shouldst thou be born
To bear a life so wasted and forlorn?
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
Yea, why then was I born, since hope is pain,
And life a lingering death, and faith but vain,
And love the loss of all I seemed to gain?
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
Dost thou believe that this shall ever be,
That in our land no face thou e'er shalt see,
No voice thou e'er shalt hear to gladden thee?
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
No longer do I know of good or bad,
I have forgotten that I once was glad;
I do but chase a dream that I have had.
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
Stay! take one image for thy dreamful night;
Come, look at her, who in the world's despite
Weeps for delaying love and lost delight.
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
Mock me not till to-morrow. Mock the dead,
They will not heed it, or turn round the head,
To note who faithless are, and who are wed.
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
We mock thee not. Hast thou not heard of those
Whose faithful love the loved heart holds so close,
That death must wait till one word lets it loose?
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
I hear you not: the wind from off the waste
Sighs like a song that bids me make good haste
The wave of sweet forgetfulness to taste.
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
Come back! like such a singer is the wind,
As to a sad tune sings fair words and kind,
That he with happy tears all eyes may blind!
Abide! abide! for we are happy here.

Amans.
Did I not hear her sweet voice cry from far,
That o'er the lonely waste fair fields there are,
Fair days that know not any change or care?
Let me depart, since ye are happy here.

Puellæ.
Oh, no! not far thou heardest her, but nigh;
Nigh, 'twixt the waste's edge and the darkling sky.
Turn back again, too soon it is to die.
Abide! a little while be happy here.

Amans.
How with the lapse of lone years could I strive,
And can I die now that thou biddest live?
What joy this space 'twixt birth and death can give.
Can we depart who are so happy here?

THE GOD OF THE POOR.

THERE *was a lord that hight Maltete,*
Among great lords he was right great,
On poor folk trod he like the dirt,
None but God might do him hurt.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

With a grace of prayers sung loud and late
Many a widow's house he ate;
Many a poor knight at his hands
Lost his house and narrow lands.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

He burnt the harvests many a time,
He made fair houses heaps of lime;
Whatso man loved wife or maid
Of Evil-head was sore afraid.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

He slew good men and spared the bad;
Too long a day the foul dog had,
E'en as all dogs will have their day;
But God is as strong as man, I say.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

For a valiant knight, men called Boncœur,
Had hope he should not long endure,
And gathered to him much good folk,
Hardy hearts to break the yoke.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

But *Boncœur deemed it would be vain*
To *strive his guarded house to gain;*
Therefore, *within a little while,*
He *set himself to work by guile.*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

He *knew that Maltete loved right well*
Red *gold and heavy. If from hell*
The *Devil had cried, "Take this gold cup,"*
Down *had he gone to fetch it up.*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Twenty *poor men's lives were nought*
To *him, beside a ring well wrought.*
The *pommel of his hunting-knife*
Was *worth ten times a poor man's life.*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

A *squire new-come from over-sea*
Boncœur *called to him privily,*
And *when he knew his lord's intent,*
Clad *like a churl therefrom he went.*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

But *when he came where dwelt Maltete,*
With *few words did he pass the gate,*
For *Maltete built him walls anew,*
And, *wageless, folk from field he drew.*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Now *passed the squire through this and that,*
Till *he came to where Sir Maltete sat,*
And *over red wine wagged his beard:*
Then *spoke the squire as one afeard.*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Lord, give me grace, for privily
I have a little word for thee."
"Speak out," said Maltete, "have no fear,
For how can thy life to thee be dear?"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Such an one I know," he said,
"Who hideth store of money red."
Maltete grinned at him cruelly:
"Thou florin-maker, come anigh."
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"E'en such as thou once preached of gold,
And showed me lies in books full old,
Nought gat I but evil brass,
Therefore came he to the worser pass.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Hast thou will to see his skin?
I keep my heaviest marks therein,
For since nought else of wealth had he,
I deemed full well he owed it me."
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Nought know I of philosophy,"
The other said, "nor do I lie.
Before the moon begins to shine,
May all this heap of gold be thine."
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Ten leagues from this a man there is,
Who seemeth to know but little bliss,
And yet full many a pound of gold
A dry well nigh his house doth hold.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"*John-a-Wood is he called, fair lord,*
Nor know I whence he hath this hoard."
Then Maltete said, "As God made me,
A wizard over-bold is he!"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"*It were a good deed, as I am a knight,*
To burn him in a fire bright;
This John-a-Wood shall surely die,
And his gold in my strong chest shall lie.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"*This very night, I make mine avow,*
The truth of this mine eyes shall know."
Then spoke an old knight in the hall,
"*Who knoweth what things may befall?*"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"I *rede thee go with a great rout,*
For thy foes they ride thick about."
"*Thou and the devil may keep my foes,*
Thou redest me this gold to lose.
Deus est Deus pauperum."

"I *shall go with but some four or five,*
So shall I take my thief alive.
For if a great rout he shall see,
Will he not hide his wealth from me?"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

The old knight muttered under his breath,
"*Then mayhap ye shall but ride to death.*"
But Maltete turned him quickly round,
"*Bind me this gray-beard under ground!*
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"*Because ye are old, ye think to jape.*
Take heed, ye shall not long escape.
When I come back safe, old carle, perdie,
Thine head shall brush the linden-tree."
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Therewith he rode with his five men,
And Boncœur's spy, for good leagues ten,
Until they left the beaten way,
And dusk it grew at end of day.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

There, in a clearing of the wood,
Was John's house, neither fair nor good.
In a ragged plot his house anigh,
Thin coleworts grew but wretchedly.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

John-a-Wood in his doorway sat,
Turning over this and that,
And chiefly how he best might thrive,
For he had will enough to live.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Green coleworts from a wooden bowl
He ate; but careful was his soul,
For if he saw another day,
Thenceforth was he in Boncœur's pay.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

So when he saw how Maltete came,
He said, "Beginneth now the game!"
And in the doorway did he stand
Trembling, with hand joined fast to hand.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

When Maltete did this carle behold
Somewhat he doubted of his gold,
But cried out, "Where is now thy store
Thou hast through books of wicked lore?"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Then said the poor man, right humbly,
"Fair lord, this was not made by me,
I found it in mine own dry well,
And had a mind thy grace to tell.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Therefrom, my lord, a cup I took
This day, that thou thereon mightst look,
And know me to be leal and true,"
And from his coat the cup he drew.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Then Maltete took it in his hand,
Nor knew he ought that it used to stand
On Boncœur's cupboard many a day.
"Go on," he said, "and show the way.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Give me thy gold, and thou shalt live,
Yea, in my house thou well mayst thrive."
John turned about and 'gan to go
Unto the wood with footsteps slow.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

But as they passed by John's woodstack,
Growled Maltete, "Nothing now doth lack
Wherewith to light a merry fire,
And give my wizard all his hire."
Deus est Deus pauperum.

The western sky was red as blood,
Darker grew the oaken-wood;
"Thief and carle, where are ye gone?
Why are we in the wood alone?
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"What is the sound of this mighty horn?
Ah, God! that ever I was born!
The basnets flash from tree to tree;
Show me, thou Christ, the way to flee!"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Boncœur it was with fifty men;
Maltete was but one to ten,
And his own folk prayed for grace,
With empty hands in that lone place.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"Grace shall ye have," Boncœur said,
"All of you but Evil-head."
Lowly could that great lord be,
Who could pray so well as he?
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Then could Maltete howl and cry,
Little will he had to die.
Soft was his speech, now it was late,
But who had will to save Maltete?
Deus est Deus pauperum.

They brought him to the house again,
And toward the road he looked in vain.
Lonely and bare was the great highway,
Under the gathering moonlight grey.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

They took off his gilt basnet,
That he should die there was no let;
They took off his coat of steel,
A damned man he well might feel.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"*Will ye all be rich as kings,*
Lacking naught of all good things?"
"*Nothing do we lack this eve;*
When thou art dead, how can we grieve?"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

"*Let me drink water ere I die,*
None henceforth comes my lips anigh."
They brought it him in that bowl of wood.
He said, "*This is but poor men's blood!*"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

They brought it him in the cup of gold.
He said, "*The women I have sold*
Have wept it full of salt for me;
I shall die gaping thirstily."
Deus est Deus pauperum.

On the threshold of that poor homestead
They smote off his evil head;
They set it high on a great spear,
And rode away with merry cheer.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

At the dawn, in lordly state,
They rode to Maltete's castle-gate.
"*Whoso willeth laud to win,*
Make haste to let your masters in!"
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Forthwith opened they the gate,
No man was sorry for Maltete.
Boncœur conquered all his lands,
A good knight was he of his hands.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

Good men he loved, and hated bad;
Joyful days and sweet he had;
Goods deeds did he plenteously;
Beneath him folk lived frank and free.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

He lived long, with merry days;
None said aught of him but praise.
God on him have full mercy;
A good knight merciful was he.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

The great lord, called Maltete, is dead;
Grass grows above his feet and head,
And a holly-bush grows up between
His rib-bones gotten white and clean.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

A carle's sheep-dog certainly
Is a mightier thing than he.
Till London-bridge shall cross the Nen,
Take we heed of such-like men.
Deus est Deus pauperum.

THE BURGHERS' BATTLE.

THICK *rise the spear-shafts o'er the land*
That erst the harvest bore;
The sword is heavy in the hand,
And we return no more.
The light wind waves the Ruddy Fox,
Our banner of the war,
And ripples in the Running Ox,
And we return no more.
Across our stubble acres now
The teams go four and four;
But out-worn elders guide the plough,
And we return no more.
And now the women heavy-eyed
Turn through the open door
From gazing down the highway wide,
Where we return no more.
The shadows of the fruited close
Dapple the feast-hall floor;
There lie our dogs and dream and doze,
And we return no more.
Down from the minster tower to-day
Fall the soft chimes of yore
Amidst the chattering jackdaws' play:
And we return no more.
But underneath the streets are still;
Noon, and the market's o'er!
Back go the goodwives o'er the hill;
For we return no more.
What merchant to our gates shall come?
What wise man bring us lore?
What abbot ride away to Rome,
Now we return no more?

What mayor shall rule the hall we built?
Whose scarlet sweep the floor?
What judge shall doom the robber's guilt,
Now we return no more?
New houses in the streets shall rise
Where builded we before,
Of other stone wrought otherwise;
For we return no more.
And crops shall cover field and hill
Unlike what once they bore,
And all be done without our will,
Now we return no more.
Look up! the arrows streak the sky,
The horns of battle roar;
The long spears lower and draw nigh,
And we return no more.
Remember how beside the wain,
We spoke the word of war,
And sowed this harvest of the plain,
And we return no more.
Lay spears about the Ruddy Fox!
The days of old are o'er;
Heave sword about the Running Ox!
For we return no more.

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